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Leadership Competency Series

NLP and Competency Modeling

The Difference that makes the Difference

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES / The key to the success of any individual or organisation is continuous learning of modelling behaviour, says M R Chandramowly.

SOCIAL scientists, industrial psychologists and management experts, especially from last 60 years have been continuously engaged in search of human excellence. They have come up with research findings on reasons for performance excellence, differentiating factors of business super stars from time to time. They have presented us with tools and models such as MBO, Balance Score Card, TQM, and Six-sigma to focus on the process aspect of business. We have Silva Mind Control, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), Yogic Linguistic Programming (YLP), Action Learning, People Capability Maturity Model (PCMM), 7 Habits Model, Emotional Intelligence Model, and a large variety of Leadership models built around people processes to achieve success.

I recognise all these as complementary to define a competency model for an organisation and to map it for the key jobs, considering the current new changes, new learning and new challenges of industries, to finally evolve success models updating and expanding the leadership competency portfolio choices.

The objective of all different tools and techniques of people development is only to know what brings out star performance, how people successfully cross the waves of turbulence, how one can make a difference and become unique by using specific mix of competencies and to discover what's "the difference that makes the difference".

NLP is programming our behaviour and the way we organise our ideas and actions, which produces expected and unexpected results. Neuro is our thinking process using our senses. It is 'linguistic' in the ways we use language and how it influences us and those around us.

I can see the roots of these principles in our ancient wisdom. Indian thinkers thousands of years ago have done this dissection of body, mind and intellect of human personality. They analysed the interplay of the organs of perception and actions of the body, feeling and emotions of mind, thinking and contemplation of intellect. It is interesting to see how marvellously these concepts are further developed and systematised for learning and application for practical life success by the western thinkers and equally disappointing to see how we have safely preserved these doctrines of life sciences in our "pooja rooms"

and feel proud of it without bringing it out using in real life.

One of the key drivers of the work by Richard Bandler and John Grinder (who developed NLP during early 1970) was to discover how people excel and most particularly when managing change. Their studies indicated that certain basic principles needed to be in place to create the “difference that makes the difference”. The competency movement also developed during this time by David McClelland.

The basic principles of excellence defined by NLP are: (1) We have all the resources we need, (2) The meaning of any communication is the effect it has (3) There is no failure, only feed back (4) The map is not the territory and every person's map is unique.

At different points of time, we have achieved success. NLP suggests; if we recall the ways we did so, then we can transfer these to any of our present-day challenges. Be it confidence, energy, strength or other personal resource, we have used it somewhere in our past and can access it again. This can be compared to the concept of “seven chakras” raising our consciousness levels from selfishness to selflessness. It is important to note that the tools are within us and private victory always precedes public victory.

The meaning of any communication is the effect it has.

What happens when you talk or send an e-mail to someone? Sometimes the reply you receive is completely unexpected in content? Do you feel it is awkward, ignorant and contrary to the way you want? Can you change the effect? No.

However, once you understand your part in the equation and do something different to put across your intended message, you can make difference and communicate.

There is no failure, only feedback.

How do you react when, in your opinion, things go wrong? Are you persistent attempters doing same things over and over again till you get it right? Or, do you think it over and decide what you can do differently for a better result? Imagine a past failure situation when you did a mistake. Now imagine the same situation and what could you have done differently? Learning from feedback means you are more likely to be flexible rather than rigid in your dealings with yourself and others. Thomas Edison responding on why it took so long to invent the light bulb said: “Every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward.”

The map is not the territory; every person's map is unique.

My way of looking at things is unique to me, yours is unique to you. “A lover of nature likes a flower blossoming in the plant. A youth may like the same flower on the braid of his beloved. A devotee likes a flower from the deity in shrine. But a flower-vendor likes a flower for money!” said DVG. Think of the people with whom you are in contact at your workplace — colleagues, bosses, peers, senior managers, customers or suppliers. How might their mind maps differ from yours? If you are able to put all the different perceptions

together, you will come much closer to a complete picture, than if you stay within the boundaries of your own view. If you accept this principle of NLP, then you respect and rejoice in difference.

Establishing outcomes

The first and central step in NLP is to establish outcomes. It is important to focus positively on what you want achieve. What do you want? What would you like to happen? Removal of negative ideas and thoughts are equally important. Instead of saying “Don’t look behind you”, we can say “Keep looking forward”. The statement “keep looking forward indicates the distant objective to be achieved and 'don't look behind you”, would immediately turn the head to avoid something.

Be specific in describing your positive outcome. Asking yourself what? Who? When? How? Where? makes you to move from general to specific terms, enabling to focus on answers and solutions. What will you see, hear and feel when it is happening? NLP emphasizes to imagine as much sensory-based evidence as you can to enhance the energy and application of your outcome. Whose outcome is it? It is yours.

If you are depended on others and waiting for other to change, you may risk becoming a passive spectator. Consider your own part of contribution to the process.

The success of achieving your outcome depends on how much you want it. How does it fit in with other aspects of your life? A well-formed outcome will include all the resources internal and external, which you have used before and are transferable. The acquisition of external resources needs greater planning. If you know what you need, you have better chances of acquiring those.

Perceptual positions - an exercise

Perceptual position is technique to increase your effectiveness in relating to others by extending your information about the way they behave and how they make their choices. On an occasion when you seem stuck in your communication, it can be very valuable to change your position, literally and figuratively and look at the different views of the situation. Think of an unsatisfactory situation between you and some one else. Put three sheets of paper on the floor, labelled “self”, “other” and “observer”. Stand on “self” facing the “other” and recognise how you experience the situation you have chosen. Then move away and turn around. Stand on the “other” sheet and recognise how you, as the other person might experience the interaction. Step on the neutral position “observer” sheet and look at “self” and “other”. What is or what is not being achieved. On this sheet, you cannot take sides and use emotions, as you are an observer. Now move back to “self” and repeat the stages as many times as you need again to gain full information and insight.

You can decide what you will do because of your new understanding. NLP principles work only, if one enjoys new ideas, willing to change, open to look for another opportunity for learning and has an open mind. If some people say “you cannot teach an old dog new

trick”, “I have never tried things like this before - they never work” or “Nothing will make me change”, then, NLP won't work for them.

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